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and making their perusal a common employment or business. One enervates, the other strengthens and restores ; one disables from the performance of duty, the other is one of the readiest preparations for a return to it. In reading, merely for amusement, the mind is passive, acquiescent, recipient, merely. The subjects treated are not such as task its powers of thought. It has no occasion to bring forth and re-examine its own possessions ; but it is wafted, unresistingly, along, through whatever regions the author chooses to bear it. It is this passiveness, this surrendering of the mind, that constitutes the pernicious influence of reading for amusement, when carried to excess ; because a series, a reiteration, of efforts is just as indispensable, in order to strengthen any faculty of the intellect, as a series of muscular exercises is, to strengthen any limb of the body ; and in reading for amusement, these efforts are not made. Even when we read the most instructive books, and transfer to our own minds the knowledge they contain, the work is but half done. Most of their value consists in the occasions they furnish to the reader, to exert all his own vigor upon the subject, and, through the law of mental association, to bring all his own faculties to act upon it. A stream of thought, from his own mind, should mingle with the stream that comes from the book. Such reading creates ability, while it communicates knowledge. The greatest accumulation of facts, until the comparing and the foreseeing faculties have acted upon them, is as useless, as a telescope or a watch would be, in the hands of a savage. Single ideas may be transferred from an author to a reader, but habits of thinking are intransferable ; they must be formed within the reader's own mind, if they are ever to exist there. Actual observation, within its field, is better than reading ; but the advantage of reading consists, in its presenting a field, almost infinitely larger and richer, than any actual observation can ever do. Yet, if the reader does not take up the materials presented, and examine them, one by one, and learn their qualities and relations, he will not be able to work them into any productions of his own. He will be like a savage, who has passed through the length of a civilized country, and just looked at its machinery, its ships and houses, who, when he returns home, will not be able to make a better tool, or build a better canoe, or construct a better cabin, than before. It is his own hand-work, on the materials of his art, which, after thousands of trials and experiments, at last turns the rude apprentice into such an accomplished artisan, that his hand instantaneously obeys his will, and, in executing the most ingenious works, he loses the consciousness of volition. And so it is by energetic, long-continued, mental application to the elements of thought, that the crude and meagre conceptions of a child are refined, and expand-

ed, and multiplied, into the sound judgment and good sense of a man of practical wisdom. Something, without doubt, is referable to the endowments of Nature ; but, with the mass of men, much more is attributable to that richest of all Nature's endowments, the disposition to self-culture, through patient, long-sustained effort. No man, therefore, who has not made these efforts, times innumerable, and profited, in each succeeding case, by the error or imperfection of the preceding, has any more right to expect the possession of wisdom, discretion, foresight, than the novice in architecture or in sculpture has to expect, that, in his first attempt, he shall be able to equal the Church of St. Peter's, or chisel a perfect statue of Apollo. Now the bane of making amusement the sole object of one's reading, and the secret of its influence in weakening the mind, consist in its superseding or discarding all attendant exertion on the part of the reader. Without this exertion, the power of clear, orderly, coherent, thought,—the power of seeing whether means have been adapted to ends,—becomes inactive, and, at length, withers away, like a palsied limb ; while, at the same time, the attention being hurried over a variety of objects, between which, Nature has established no relations, a sort of volatility or giddiness is inflicted upon the mind, so that the general result, upon the whole faculties, is that of weakness and faintness combined.

What gives additional importance to this subject, is the fact, that by far the most extensive portion of this reading, for amusement, consists of the perusal of fictitious works. The number of books and articles, which, under the names of romances, novels, tales in verse or prose,—from the elaborate work of three volumes to the hasty production of three chapters or three pages,—is so wide-spread and ever-renewing, that any computation of them transcends the power of the human faculties. They gush from the printing-press. Their authors are a nation. When speaking of the reading public, we must be understood, with reference to the subject-matter of the reading. In regard to scientific works on government, political economy, morals, philosophy, the reading public is very small. Hardly one in fifty, amongst adults, belongs to it. For works of biography, travels, history, it is considerably larger. But in reference to fictitious works, it is large, and astonishingly active. It requires so little acquaintance with our language, and so little knowledge of sublunary things and their relations, to understand them ; and the inconvenience of failing to understand a word, a sentence, or a page, is so trivial ; so exactly do they meet the case of minds that are ignorant, indolent, and a little flighty, that they are welcomed by vast numbers. Other books are read slowly ; commenced, laid aside, resumed, and perused, in intervals of leisure. These are run through, with almost incredible velocity. Take a work on morals, of the same size with a novel ; the reading of the former will occupy a month, the latter will be despatched, without intervening sleep. Of works, unfolding to us the structure of our own bodies, and the means of preserving health, and of the constitution of our own minds, and the infinite diversity of the spiritual paths which the mind can traverse, each bringing after it its own peculiar consequences ; of works, laying open the complicated relations of society, illustrative of the general duties belonging to all, and of the special duties arising from special positions ; of works, making us acquainted with the beneficent laws and properties of Nature, and their adaptations to supply our needs and enhance our welfare,—of works of these descriptions, editions of a few hundred copies, only, are printed, and then the types are distributed, in despair of any further demand ; while of fictitious works, thousands of copies are thrown off, at first ; and they are stereotyped, in confidence that the insatiable public will call for new supplies. It was but a few years, after the publication of Sir Walter Scott's poems and novels, that fifty thousand copies of many of them had been sold in Great Britain, alone. Under the stimulus which he applied to the public imagination, the

practice of novel-reading has grown to such extent, that his imitators and copyists have overspread a still wider field, and covered it to a greater depth. In this country, the reading of novels has been still more epidemic, because, in most parts of it, so great a portion of the people can read ; and because, owing to the extensiveness of the demand, they have been afforded so cheaply, that the price of a perusal has often been less than the value of the light, by which they were read.

To give some idea of the difference in the sales of different kinds of works, it may be stated, that, of some of Bulwer's and Marryat's novels, from ten to fifteen thousand copies have been sold in this country ; while of that highly valuable and instructive work, Sparks's American Biography, less than two thousand copies, on an average, have been sold ; and of Prescott's Ferdinand and Isabella, only about thirty-six hundred. The latter is considered a remarkably large sale ; and is owing, in no inconsiderable degree, to the superior manner in which that interesting history was written.

No discerning person, who has arrived at middle age, and has been at all conversant with society, can have failed to remark the effect, upon mind and character, of reading frivolous books, when pursued as a regular mental employment, and not as an occasional recreation ; the lowered tone of the faculties, the irregular sallies of feeling, the want of a power of continuous thought on the same subject, and the imperfect views taken of all practical questions ; an imperfection, compounded by including things not belonging to the subject, and by omitting things which do. Any such person will be able to give his attestation to the fact, and be willing to advance it into an axiom, that *light reading makes light minds*.

So far as it respects fictitious writings, the explanation of their weakening and dispersive influence is palpable to the feeblest comprehension. All men must recognize the wide distinction between *intellect* and *feeling* ; between *ideas* and *emotions*. These two classes of mental operations are inherently distinct from each other, in their nature ; they are called into activity by different classes of objects ; they are cultivated by different processes, and, as one or the other predominates, in the mental constitution, widely-different results follow, both in conduct and character. All sciences are the offspring of the intellect. On the other hand, there cannot be poetry or eloquence without emotion. From the intellect come order, demonstration, invention, discovery ; from the feelings, enthusiasm, pathos, and sublime sentiments in morals and religion. The attainments of the greatest intellect are gathered with comparative slowness ; but each addition is a permanent one. The process resembles that by which material structures are reared, which are laboriously built up, brick by brick, or stone by stone, but, when once erected, are steadfast and enduring. But the feelings, on the other hand, are like the unstable elements of the air or ocean, which are suddenly roused from a state of tranquillity into vehement commotion, and as suddenly subside into repose. When rhetoricians endeavor to excite more vivid conceptions of truth, by means of sensible images, they liken the productions of the intellect to the solidity and stern repose of time-defying pyramid or temple ; but they find symbols for the feelings and passions of men, in the atmosphere, which obeys the slightest impulse, and is ready to start into whirlwinds or tempests, at once. To add to the stock of practical knowledge, and to increase intellectual ability, requires voluntary and long-sustained effort ; but feelings and impulses are often spontaneous, and always susceptible of being roused into action by a mere glance of the eye, or the sound of a voice. To become master of an exact, coherent, full, set or complement of ideas, on any important subject, demands fixed attention, patience, study ; but emotions or passions flash up, suddenly, and, while they blaze, they are consumed. In the mechanical and useful arts, for instance, a knowledge of the structure and quality of materials, of the weight and motive power of fluids, of the laws of gravitation, and their action upon

bodies in a state of motion or rest, is acquired by the engineer, the artisan, the machinist,—not by sudden intuition, but by months and years of steady application. Arithmetic, or the science of numbers, geometry, or the science of quantities, astronomy, and the uses of astronomical knowledge in navigation, must all have been profoundly studied ; the almost innumerable ideas, which form these vast sciences, must have been discovered and brought together, one by one, before any mariner could leave a port on this side of the globe, and strike, without failure, the smallest town or river, on the opposite side of it. And the same principle is no less true, in regard to jurisprudence, to legislation, and to all parts of social economy, so far as they are worthy to be called sciences. But that part of the train of our mental operations, which we call the emotions or affections ; those powers of our spiritual constitution, denominated the propensities and sentiments, which give birth to appetite, hope, fear, grief, love, shame, pride, at the very first produce a feeling, which is perfect or complete, of its kind. An infant cannot reason, but may experience as perfect an emotion of fear, as an adult. Mankind, for thousands of years, have been advancing in the attainments of intellect ; but the fathers of the race had feelings, as electric and impetuous, as any of their latest descendants. In every intellectual department, therefore, there must be accurate observation, in collecting the elementary ideas ; these ideas must be compared, arranged, methodized, in the mind ; each faculty, which has cognizance of the subject, taking them up, individually, and, as it were, handling, assorting, measuring, weighing them, until each one is marked at its true value, and arranged in its right place, so that they may stand ready to be reproduced, and to be embodied in any outward fabric or institution, in any work of legislation or philosophy, which their possessor may afterwards wish to construct. Such intellectual processes must have been performed by every man, who has ever acquired eminence in the practical business of life, or who has ever made any great discovery in the arts or sciences ; except, perhaps, in a very few cases, where discovery has been the result of happy accident. It is this perseverance, in studying into the nature of things, in unfolding their complicated tissues, discerning their minutest relations, penetrating to their centres, that has made such men as Lord Bacon, Sir Isaac Newton, Dr. Franklin, Watt, Fulton, Sir Humphrey Davy, and Dr. Bowditch ; men, the light of whose minds is now shed over all parts of the civilized world, as diffusively and universally as the light of the sun, and as enduring as that light. And so it is, in all the other departments of life, whether higher or humbler ; not more in the case of the diplomatist, who is appointed an ambassador, to manage a difficult negotiation at a foreign court, than in that of the agent, who is chosen by a town, because of his good sense and thorough knowledge of affairs, to conduct a municipal controversy. It is to such habits of thought and reflection upon the actual relations of things, as they exist, and as God has constituted them, that we are indebted for the men who know how to perform, each day, the duties of each day, and, in any station, the duties of that station ; men, who, because of their clear-sightedness and wisdom, are nominated as arbitrators or umpires, by contending parties, or whose appearance in the jury-box is hailed by the counsellors and suitors of the court ; men, whose work has not to be done over again, and whose books or reports do not need *errata* as large as themselves. But the feelings or emotions, so far from being dependent on these intellectual habits, for their vividness and energy, are even more vivid and energetic, when freed from control and direction. The intellect hems in the feelings, by boundaries of probability and naturalness. It opposes barriers of actual and scientific truth to their devious wanderings and flights. It shows what things can be, and what things cannot be, and thus arrests the imagination, when it would otherwise soar or plunge into the impossible and the preternatural. The savage, with his uncultivated intellect, has fields for the

ramblings of fancy, which can have no existence to the philosopher ; just as an idolater has an immensity for the creations of his superstition, which, to the enlightened Christian, is a nonentity.

Now, it is the feelings, and not the intellect,—the excitable, or spontaneously-active powers of the mind, and not its steady, day-laboring faculties,—which the great body of fictitious works appeals to and exercises. Were the whole mass of these works analyzed, and reduced to its component elements, nineteen parts, in every twenty, would be found addressed to the emotions and feelings, and not to the reason and judgment. Their main staple and texture are a description of the passions of love, jealousy, hope, fear, remorse, revenge, rapture, despair,—the whole constituting a dark ground of guilt and misery, occasionally illumined by a crossing beam of extatic joy, or almost superhuman virtue. But the trials and temptations described are, rarely, such as any human being will fall into ; and the virtues celebrated are such, as few will ever have an opportunity to achieve. Hence, sympathy and aversion, desire and apprehension, are kept at the highest tension ; but it is upon incidents and scenes, outside of actual life, not in this world, and often not capable of being transferred to it. In the mean time, the understanding sleeps ; the intellect is laid aside. Those faculties have nothing to do, by which we comprehend our position in life, and our relations to society ; by which we discover what our duty is, and the wisest way to perform it. The mind surrenders itself to the interest and excitement of the story, while the powers, by which we discern tendencies, and balance probabilities, are discarded ; nay, those sober thoughts are unwelcome intruders, which come to break the delusion, and to repress an insane exhilaration of the feelings,—until, at last, the diseased and infatuated mind echoes that pagan saying, so treasonable to truth, that it would prefer to go wrong with one guide, rather than right with another ; as though, in a universe which an all-wise Being has formed, any thing could be as well as to go right. In the reports of some of the French hospitals for lunatics, the *reading of romances* is set down as one of the standing causes of insanity.

It is the perusal of this class of works, as a regular or principal mental employment, of which I am speaking ; and it is easy for any one, acquainted with the laws of the human mind, and with the causes, which foster or stint its growth, to predict the effect of such reading, both upon the will and the capacity to perform the everyday duties and charities of life. Could all temporal duties be written down in a catalogue, we should find, that private, domestic, in-door, duties would constitute vastly the greatest number. The social duties, growing out of relationship, friendship, and neighborhood, would make up the next largest and most important class ; for, while all others only call upon us, occasionally, the demands of these are perpetual. Now, for the appropriate and punctual discharge of these numerous and ever-recurring duties, a knowledge of all the scenes and incidents, the loves and hates, the despairs and raptures, contained in all the fictions ever written, is about as fit a preparation, as a knowledge of all the “ castles in the air,” ever built by visionaries and dreamers, would be to the father of a houseless family, who wished to erect a dwelling for their shelter, but was wholly ignorant both of the materials and the processes, necessary for the work. And the reason is, that, in the regions of fiction, the imagination can have every thing in its own way ; it can arrange the course of events as it pleases, and still bring out the desired results. But, in actual life, where the law of cause and effect pervades all, links all, determines all, the appropriate consequences of good or evil follow from their antecedents, with inevitable certainty. The premises of sound or false judgments, of right or wrong actions, being given, the course of Nature and Providence predetermines the conclusions of happiness or misery, from which we cannot escape. Hence, the mind,—which, in the world of imagination, has been relieved

from all responsibility for consequences,—being rigorously held to abide by consequences, whenever it descends to sublunary affairs, and being ignorant of the connection between causes and effects, finds all its judgments turned into folly, and all its acts terminating in disaster or ruin.

Nor are the *moral* effects of this kind of reading, when systematically pursued, less pernicious than the intellectual ; for it will be found that those, who squander their sympathies most prodigally over distresses that were never felt, are the firmest stoics over calamities actually suffered. The inveterate novel-reader will accompany heroes and heroines to the ends of the earth, and in tears bewail their fancied misfortunes ; while he can command the serenest equanimity over sufferings in the next street, or at the next door. The continued contemplation of pain, without any accompanying effort to relieve it, forms the habit of dissociating feeling from action, and presents the moral anomaly of one, who professes to feel pity, but withholds succor. In all healthy minds, judicious action follows virtuous impulse. Nor do the splendid heroes of romance, ever earn their greatness and their honors, by a youth of study and toil, by contemning the seductions of inglorious ease ; and thus they never hold out to the young mind the example of industry, and perseverance, and self-denial, as the indispensable prerequisites to greatness. Far more baneful are the effects, when characters, whose lives are immersed in secret profligacy, are varnished, to the eye of the world, by wealth and elegance ; or when audacious criminals are endowed with such shining attractions of wit, and talent, and address, as cause the sympathy of the reader to outweigh his abhorrence.

But, if it is unfortunate that so many people should addict themselves to the reading of fiction, because their minds are immature and unbalanced, and have no touchstone, whereby they can distinguish between what is extravagant, marvellous, and supernatural, and what, from its accordance to the standard of Nature, is simple, instructive and elevating ; it is doubly unfortunate, that so many excellent young persons should be misled into the same practice, either from a laudable desire to maintain some acquaintance with what is called the literary world, and to furnish themselves with materials for conversation, or from a vague notion, that such reading, alone, will give a polish to the mind, and adorn it with the graces of elegance and refinement. In endeavoring to elucidate the manner, in which this indulgence entails weakness upon the understanding, and unfits it for a wise, steady, beneficent, course of life, in a world so abounding, as this is, in solemn realities and obligations, I would most sedulously refrain from uttering a word in disparagement of a proportionate and measured cultivation of what are called polite literature and the polite arts, in all their branches. While we have sentiments and affections, as well as thoughts and ideas ; while, in the very account of the creation of the world, it is said that some things were made to be *pleasant to the sight*, and others good for sustenance ; and while our spiritual natures are endowed with susceptibilities to enjoy the former, as well as with capacities to profit by the latter ; any measures for the elevation of the common mind, which do not recognize the existence, and provide for the cultivation, of the first class of powers, as well as for the second, would form a community of men, wholly uncouth and rugged in their strength, and almost unamiable, however perfect might be their rectitude. The mind of every man is instinct with capacities above the demands of the workshop or the field,—capacities which are susceptible of pure enjoyments from music, and art, and all the embellishments of civilized life, and whose indulgence would lighten the burden of daily toil. All have susceptibilities of feeling, too subtle and evanescent to find any medium of utterance, except in the language of poetry and art, and too refined to be called into being, but by the creations of genius. The culture of these sensibilities makes almost as important a distinction between savage and civilized man, as the training of the intellect ; and, without such cultivation, though the form of humanity

may remain, it will be disrobed of many of its choicest beauties. Still, in a world, where, by the ordinations of Providence, utility outranks elegance ; where harvests to sustain life must be cultivated, before gardens are planted, to gratify taste ; where all the fascinations of regal courts are no atonement for the neglect of a single duty ;—in such a world, no gentility, or gracefulness of mind or manners, however exquisite and fascinating, is any substitute for practical wisdom and benevolence. Without copious resources of useful knowledge, in our young men and young women ; without available, applicable judgment and discretion, adequate to the common occasions, and ready for the emergencies, of life ; the ability to quote poetic sentiments, and expatiate on passages of fine writing, or a connoisseurship in art, is but mockery. Hence it is to be regretted, that so many excellent young persons, emulous of self-improvement, should commit the error of supposing, that an acquaintance with the institutions of society, with the real wants and conditions of their fellow-men, and with the means of relieving them, can be profitably exchanged for a knowledge of the entire universe of fiction ; or that it is wise, in their hours of study, to neglect the wonderful works of the Creator, in order to become familiar with the fables of men. Intellect must lay a foundation and rear a superstructure, before taste can adorn it. Without solid knowledge and good sense, there is no substance into which ornament or accomplishment can be inwrought. It is impossible to polish vacuity, or give a lustre to the surface of emptiness.

One other general remark is applicable to a large portion of this class of works. Most of them were written in Great Britain, for British readers. Hence, they suppose and represent a state of society, where wealth outranks virtue, and birth takes precedence of talent, except in extraordinary cases of mental endowment or attainment. They describe two classes of men, which we never ought to have,—one class, whose distinction and elevation are founded on the adventitious circumstances of birth or fortune, and another class, who are the ignorant, degraded dependants, upon the former ; but they do not describe any class of industrious, intelligent, exemplary, just, and benevolent, men, so alive to the rights of others, that, under no temptation, would they become lords, and so conscious of their own, that, under no force, would they remain slaves,—a class of men, which we ought to have, and, with a proper use of the blessings Heaven has given us, we may have. Surely, such books do not contain the models, according to which the youth of a republic should be formed.

I should have felt myself wholly unwarranted, in thus commenting upon the prevalence of *amusing* and *fictitious*, compared with, *useful*, reading, and upon the pernicious consequences of indulgence in it, were it not, that the children of the State are now growing up, in this very condition of things, and under circumstances, too, which will lead them to commit the same error, and, of course, to suffer the same evil, except some new inducements can be found, to win them from it. The number of these works, with the number of their readers, is now rapidly increasing,—not absolutely, only, but relatively, and in proportion to other and useful works. The materials of which they are composed have now been so often wrought over, that moderately imitative powers are amply sufficient for recasting them, in slightly modified forms. Originality and invention have ceased to be necessary. The cheapness, too, of this class of works, gives them a preference, not only for circulating, but for town and social, libraries. I have been surprised, at finding such numbers of them, in the catalogues of the latter. I have heard of but one town or social library, from which they have been peremptorily excluded, by an article in the constitution. The by-laws of one other library set up a certain standard for books, and empower a committee, to burn all the non-conformists ; that is, the non-conforming books. In other places, authority to dispose by sale, of trivial or pernicious books, is given ; and this leads me to another subject, in re-

gard to the reading of the community, not less important than the preceding.

This subject is presented by the question, what do those persons read, who have not yet risen to the point of appreciating and admiring the better class of fictions, and of recent literary works? A taste for the better kinds of light reading presupposes a preference in the reader's mind, of what belongs to the spiritual, over what belongs to the merely animal, part of our nature; of mental, over sensual, gratifications. A knowledge, too, of some of the more obvious phenomena of the material world, and of the operations of the human mind, has made many books ridiculous and contemptible, which once were consulted as oracles, and filled their readers with terror and reverential awe. The fictions of the last century, whose texture consists of events, monstrous and supernatural, whose machinery is ghosts, hobgoblins, demons, and demi-gods,—written, from one end to the other, in defiance, not merely of experience, but of possibility, and adapted to the lowest ignorance; these, in rare instances only, have been republished. They have been driven from shelves and tables, upon which the feeblest ray of the light of science has been cast. Yet even within the last year, large editions of *Dream-Books* and *Fortune-Tellers* have been published. But there is a kind of reading, in the community, wholly unknown to the publishers of fashionable novels, and of the better sort of ephemeral literature. To those who have not been in the way of knowing, nor in the habit of reflecting, what kind of reading is most congenial and welcome, to the least educated portion of the people, and through what channels they are supplied, the facts which have existed and still exist must be a source of alarm. Numerous itinerant booksellers are constantly on the circuit of the country, offering, from door to door, such books, as, in the advancing knowledge and changing tastes of the times, are no longer saleable at the bookstore, nor inquired for, at the circulating library. The precise extent of this traffic, it is impossible to determine; yet, from all I can learn, I am satisfied, it is carried on to a very considerable degree, especially in inland towns, and in the purlieus of populous places. One gentleman informed me, that, in the vicinity of a manufacturing village, where he lived, he had seen half a dozen of these book-peddlers, in a fortnight. In communications received, on the subject of established libraries, mention of similar facts has occasionally been made, although that was not one of the subjects, on which information was sought. During the last Autumn, I saw, in a beautiful, inland town, the contents of a pedler's vehicle, unladen and arranged in a stall, by the side of the street. I took occasion carefully to examine the books, thus exposed for sale. Amongst several hundred volumes, there were not more than two or three books, which any judicious person would ever put into the hands of a child, after he could read. The rest consisted of the absurdest novels of the last century, of stories of bucaniers, of pirates and murderers, of shipwrecks, of Newgate calendars, and accounts of other exciting and extraordinary trials, of different sizes and prices, to meet the ability of purchasers. On a temporary counter, were spread out bundles of songs, in single sheets, some patriotic, some profane, and some obscene,—to be sold for a cent apiece. Amongst the books, were Volney's '*Ruins*,' and Paine's '*Age of Reason*.' At the time of this exposition for sale, a literary festival, occupying two days, was held in the same village; on which occasion, profound, philosophical, literary, and religious, discourses were delivered to intelligent and gratified audiences. The stall, where the books were sold, was within a stone's throw of the church, where the anniversary was celebrated. Both exercises went on, together. The thought, irrepressible on the occasion, was, how much of that immense difference, between those, who listened with delight, to the eloquence of the discourses, and appreciated the instruction they gave, and those who purchased the moral venom, to satisfy the cravings of a natural appetite, to which no entertain-

ment of better things had ever been offered ;—how much of this immense difference was perfectly within the power, and therefore within the responsibility, of society. Surely, such taste and such books, at once to gratify and aggravate it, are not the means, wherewith the children, in a free-government, and of a Christian people, are to lay the ever-during foundations of conduct and character.

The statistics of the other class of institutions, which have the same general object in view, as public libraries, viz., Mechanics' Institutes, either with or without reading-rooms, and Lyceums or associations under any name, before which courses of Popular Lectures have been delivered, are as follows ;—the statements referring to the year preceding July, 1839.

SUFFOLK COUNTY.

Number of courses of Lectures, on literary or scientific subjects, delivered before Lyceums, Literary Societies, or associations, during the year preceding July 1, 1839,	26
Average number of Attendants,	13,443
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$11,431

The number of lectures, in the above courses, was three hundred and twenty-nine.

In this computation, no notice is taken of any course which did not consist of as many as eight lectures. Short courses, such as those of Messrs. Catlin, Graham, Espy, &c., are not included. The large number of persons attending is to be accounted for, by the fact, that the same persons, in some instances, attended two or more of the courses.

ESSEX COUNTY.

Number of Mechanics' Institutes,	3
Number of Members,	510
Number of Lyceums, &c.,	12
Average number of Attendants,	4,385
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$2,751

MIDDLESEX COUNTY.

Number of Mechanics' Institutes,	2
Number of Members,	675
Number of Lyceums, &c.,	24
Average number of Attendants,	5,080
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$3,004

WORCESTER COUNTY.

Number of Mechanics' Institutes,	1
Number of Members,	64
Number of Lyceums, &c.,	13
Average number of Attendants,	3,005
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$539

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY.

Number of Lyceums, &c.,	3
Average number of Attendants,	635
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$75

HAMPDEN COUNTY.

Number of Mechanics' Institutes,	1
Number of Members,	60
Number of Lyceums, &c.,	4
Average number of Attendants,	300
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$100

FRANKLIN COUNTY.

Number of Lyceums, &c.,	5
Average number of Attendants,	450
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$32

BERKSHIRE COUNTY.

Number of Lyceums, &c.,	10
Average number of Attendants,	1,065
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$136

NORFOLK COUNTY.

Number of Lyceums, &c.,	13
Average number of Attendants,	1,355
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$1,146

BRISTOL COUNTY.

Number of Mechanics' Institutes,	1
Number of Members,	100
Number of Lyceums, &c.,	6
Average number of Attendants,	1,060
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$1,455

PLYMOUTH COUNTY.

Number of Lyceums, &c.,	7
Average number of Attendants,	805
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$327

BARNSTABLE COUNTY.

Number of Lyceums, &c.,	5
Average number of Attendants,	570
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$73

DUKE'S COUNTY.

Number of Lyceums, &c.,	3
Average number of Attendants,	140
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$25

NANTUCKET COUNTY.

Number of Lyceums, &c.,	1
Average number of Attendants,	400
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$100

Recapitulation.

Number of Mechanics' Institutes,	8
Number of Members,	1,439
Number of Lyceums, &c.,	137
Average number of Attendants,	32,698
Expenses for Lectures, including incidental,	\$21,197

In addition to the above, there are many societies existing in the State, under the names of Lyceums, Debating Clubs, Ciceronian Associations, &c. whose members are aiming at self-improvement, by debating, declamation, reading, composition, &c. &c. Before these, lectures are sometimes, though rarely, delivered. When I have been led to suppose, that the number of lectures has not been as many as five or six for the year, I have not included them in the computation. Owing to occasional vagueness or uncertainty in the answers, I may sometimes have been led into a mistake ; but it is believed, that the above result approximates very nearly to the truth. In most country towns, little account is made of incidental expenses. They consist mainly of fuel and lights, which are often contributed by the attendants.

Occasional lectures, or short courses, on the subjects of Peace, Temperance, Abolition, &c., have, in no case, been included in the above list.

The professed object of these lectures is the instruction or amusement of persons, who already possess a considerable fund of information, and some maturity of mind. The lecturers seldom deal with rudiments, but suppose their hearers to possess a knowledge of these, already. They explain, more in detail, some subject, with which the audience is presumed to have a general acquaintance ; they elucidate some obscure point in history ; or sketch an outline-character of some celebrated man ; or present a bird's-eye view of some particular age or people. Occasionally, the lectures are grave and didactic discussions of an important point in philosophy or morals. Some persons attend these lectures, in the true spirit of philosophical inquiry ; others resort to them, as places of amusement for a leisure hour ; some attend them, in order to dignify a life of idleness, with a seeming mental occupation ; and others, again, attend them, as they would attend a theatre or other assembly, where the supposed refinement of the company, and not the instructiveness of the occasion, constitutes the attraction. From the nature and object of these institutions, therefore, and from the expectations of those by whom they are sustained, it is obvious that they are neither designed nor adapted for juvenile improvement. To those who are about to cross the loosely-defined line, which separates youth from manhood, these lectures may, to some extent, be interesting and useful. But, however useful they may be, they can never be a substitute for books, even for the youth ; and, in no respect can they be so, for children. Even as it regards adults, it is very clear, that, without collateral reading and inquiry, out of the lecture room, they can obtain only very partial and fragmentary, instead of thorough and methodical, knowledge on any subject ; and they will be in no little danger of acquiring superficial, instead of sound, views, and of amassing facts, merely, instead of penetrating to principles. It is because of this tendency to superficiality ; to make men mistake a few ideas for a system of truth, and twilight for sunshine ; that the whole scheme of Popular Lectures encounters strong opposition from some intelligent men. Their hostility, however, seems too indiscriminate. Although thoroughness and depth of knowledge always possess an immeasurable superiority, over mere sketches or outline-views ; yet, on subjects, aside and apart from our immediate employment or profession, the most learned not only may, but must be, content, with general notions, and a passing acquaintance. It is with the different branches of knowl-

edge, as with the different individuals in society ; we must know, thoroughly, those with whom we have daily dealings and intercourse, while a power of ready recognition is sufficient for the rest. It is only when the knowledge pertains to our immediate business or avocation, whatever that may be, that dim and floating notions become, not simply useless, but ruinous. Those who object to enlightening the mass of the people, in all ways, and to any extent, because they must finally stop short of accomplishment and mastership in their attainments, would do well to reflect upon the amount of things, which the most learned man upon earth knows, compared with the amount, of which he is ignorant. With regard to many of the laws and operations of Nature, going on immediately around us, the keenest vision has not yet penetrated film-deep. All knowledge, even the least, of the constitution of things, or of the course of Nature, is good and valuable, as far as it extends, provided only, that the possessor knows how little way it does extend.

But it seems undeniable, that the Lyceum class of institutions confers benefits both of a negative and positive character. They win both adults and youth from places, where time would otherwise be misspent, or worse than misspent. They originate acquaintances between persons, who would otherwise remain ignorant of each other, and thus they cultivate social feelings, prevent prejudices from springing up, in the mind, and often detach prejudices from it. They supply better topics, and elevate the tone of conversation, and thereby expel from the domestic and the social circle, vast quantities of censoriousness, obloquy, and sarcasm, against neighbors and townsmen, which, though not legally slanderous, and, therefore, not subject to legal animadversion, are yet only one grade below technical slander, and make abundant amends, in quantity, for any deficiency, in degree. It has been often repeated, by numerous and accurate observers, that, in the city of Boston, the general topics of conversation, and the mode of treating them, have been decidedly improved, since what may be called the reign of Popular Lectures.

From the point of view, then, whence I consider them, this kind of institutions possesses great importance ; for, although the children are now incapable of deriving much direct benefit from it, yet, every passing year is carrying thousands of them within the sphere of its helpful influences.

One fact, almost universal, respecting these lectures, is too important to be omitted. Strictly speaking, they are not *courses* ; that is, they are not a connected series ; they do not take up particular subjects, and treat them in such a full, methodical manner, as to make every part of them pervious to the sight of the attendants. On the contrary, the topics discussed are almost as numerous as the lectures. Chance and accident, not order and coherence, determine their succession. The relation between successive lectures is that of contrariety, as often as of resemblance. If bound together, at the end of the course, the series would be not merely miscellaneous, but heterogeneous. The only circumstance of unity between them would be, that they had been delivered on the same evening in the week. The least that can be said of this is, that it does not tend to cultivate a habit of systematic inquiry, or of order, in intellectual pursuits. Probably it would be more just to say, that, in this way,—especially, if the auditors do not follow out the subjects discussed, by reflection and collateral reading,—though something may be gained in expansion of knowledge, little will be realized in depth ; that habits of glimpse-catching will be formed, which lead to shallowness, rather than such habits of penetrating and clasping a subject, as characterize philosophy. The divergencies into these two paths may, at first, seem almost imperceptible ; but their terminations are as wide asunder, as wisdom and folly. A vagrant, wonder-hunting mind is as incompatible with sound knowledge and practical good sense, as vagrant habits of life are with thrift and competency. But it is to be hoped,

that this class of institutions, as well as the public taste which sustains it, is now in a transition state, and that, when it is fully established, as one of the media for diffusing intelligence, higher counsels will preside over its management ; and that, at least in regard to all the more important classes of subjects, a regular union of parts, into a perfect whole, will succeed to a confusing and dissipating variety.

In addition to lectures before regularly established Lyceums or associations, there is a class of itinerant lecturers, perpetually traversing the country, and professing to expound, in three or four lectures, or, sometimes, even in a single lecture, the principles of chemistry, electricity, astronomy, or history. A lover of good learning, or any one who has any comprehension of these great subjects, has little to hope from these sources. In one or two chemical lectures, a man may exhibit a little of the flash and glare of the experimental part of the science ; he may change the color of a fluid,—turning a vegetable blue into red, and the red, again, into a blue,—by the infusion of an acid and an alkali ; but what idea can he convey of the endlessly-diversified combinations from simple substances, that make up all the treasures of the earth ; or, of the ever-active agencies by which those substances are passing, from one combination to another, for the benefit of man ? And so of Astronomy. What loss do the infinite glory and magnificence of the Creator's works suffer, when vilified by such representations !

Respecting periodicals, newspapers, and occasional printed discourses and addresses, I have no information, not conveniently accessible to any one. In regard to the productions of the daily and periodical press, it may be said, that books cannot be a substitute for them, nor they a substitute for books. They suppose the preëxistence of an extensive and solid framework of knowledge in the reader ; and where this exists, they furnish valuable materials of fact and opinion, to be wrought into it ; but without the preëxisting frame-work, these materials will be mainly lost. Besides, without a power in the reader to sift, examine, compare, and decide for himself, they may be sources of error, as well as of truth.

After adverting to one more subject, I shall have referred to the principal means, now in existence, for the exercise of the intellect, and the formation of the character, of the whole of the rising generation. The sincere and anxious concern, which has been manifested for the religious education of our children, and the money and time expended for that purpose, in one department of labor, are to be mentioned as the highest eulogium upon the people of the State. The manifestations of this desire are every where to be seen. It has not stopped with words, but has proceeded to deeds. In this Commonwealth, in which the number of churches is larger, in proportion to the population, than in any other State or country in the world, there are, comparatively, but few religious societies, which have not gathered a Sabbath school, and procured a Sabbath school library for it. The number of volumes in the Sabbath school libraries, of one denomination alone, is more than one hundred thousand ; and of another denomination, about fifty thousand. It has been estimated, by good judges, that the number of volumes of Sabbath school books, sold in the State, and for the use of the children in the State, during the last twelve months, is about one hundred and fifty thousand. The direct aim of the mass of these books, is to inculcate doctrinal knowledge, and to awaken a spirit of piety in the minds of the young. Through the instrumentality of Bible Societies, by whose agency a Bible or Testament has been placed in the hands of destitute families, and also by the circulation of Tracts, a fund of reading, on the paramount subject of religion, is furnished to the children of the State. Another pertinent consideration is, that societies are already organized, and in active operation, whose sole object it is, to increase and to supply the demand for religious books.

But, while all will agree, that religious instruction,—properly so called,—

is the highest desideratum in the education of children ; there will also be an equal unanimity of opinion, that there are other subjects, embracing the wide range of all those duties and interests, which are denominated domestic, social, economical, political, literary, and scientific, which demand the attention and fostering care of every parent, and of every government, claiming to be, in any degree, parental.

With an aggregate, then, of about one hundred and eighty thousand volumes, in all the town and social libraries in the State, (or only one hundred thousand, out of the city of Boston,) to which only one hundred thousand persons have a right of access ; or, (which is the important point,) to which more than six hundred thousand persons have no right of access ; with a proportion of at least nineteen twentieths of these volumes, confessedly ill adapted to the wants of children ; with but about fifty school libraries ; with the fact, that, from the very conditions of their existence, our people must obtain their information, mainly, from reading, or must live and die in ignorance ; the great question arises, whether any further means are necessary, to promote the intelligence and encourage the self-culture of the rising generation. On this topic, I wish to submit a few considerations.

Libraries have been less frequently founded, within the last twenty years, than for the twenty years, before ; so that there are very few collections, of which the basis consists of the better modern works. Though reading has increased within the period, first named, it has been more desultory than it formerly was.

Such libraries as do exist are, almost without exception, located in the centre of the town, and several miles from the remotest inhabitants, so that the inconvenience of going for a book often decides the question in favor of idleness, or of some useless sport, without one ; when, could a book be procured in half an hour or an hour, to be read during the residue of an afternoon or an evening, it would not fail to be done. Such fragments of time may seem small, and, individually considered, they are so ; but, in the course of fifteen or twenty years, they amount to months, perhaps, to years ; or, rather, they amount to the whole difference between a richly-furnished and a poverty-stricken mind.

Most of the social libraries are encumbered with an admission fee or annual tax, which prevents many people from owning a share in them ; and it furnishes the strongest grounds of exclusion to the poorest people, who have most need of their benefits.

The fact, of the existence of so many Sabbath school libraries, adds another to the reasons for having libraries on other subjects ; so that the religious feeling, when inspired, may find collateral and subsidiary arguments in the religious aspects of science, and be supplied with new evidence and illustrations from every object, on which the eye can rest, in the amplitude of Nature. No one, for instance, can ever appreciate the argument of the celebrated work of Bishop Butler, who knows nothing of the course of human events, or of the laws which govern the external world. Besides, there is no doubt, that, out of a wide variety of subjects, some one would excite a taste for reading, in many young minds, which might afterwards be turned to the reading of serious books, when, without some such propitious influence, it would be almost hopeless to attempt its formation.

Of the blessings that would flow from establishing libraries, in places convenient and central for all the children in the State, to radiate light and warmth upon all their intellects, and all their hearts, no adequate conception can be formed by any finite mind. Years of time,—and, if we look at all the tens of thousands of children in the State, the aggregate will amount to centuries,—would be redeemed from sloth, from a waste of the all-precious hours of youth, in volatile amusements, in the gratification of appetite, or in fashionable dissipation ; a devotion to which is never found in conjunction with habits of reflection, with usefulness, with sound practical views on the most

important subjects of life ; for the laws of Nature have disjoined them, and placed them in opposition to each other, as the East is to the West. Although, in education, the harvest necessarily comes long after the seedtime, yet there are few parents, now living, who would not see its promise, and taste its fruits. An aged and most intelligent and respectable gentleman, in the interior of the State, in giving me an account of a well-selected library of only a hundred and fifty volumes, formed in the year 1812, "for youth in their minority," says : "Its influence, in the formation of more than two hundred youth, never can be appreciated. Its weight in the purest gold, distributed among the same youth, would have been but dross, in comparison with the library, even if no other world, but the present, is respected. The books are, literally, *used up*. The remnant, worth but ten dollars."

How few parents there are, who, in looking back to the days of their own childhood and minority, find no occasion to lament, now, when the injury is irreparable, the want of early opportunities for laying up a store of valuable knowledge ; and the loss of time, now irrecoverable, consequent upon that want ! How many feel, daily, that their power of thinking, and especially of expressing their thoughts in speech or in writing, has, all their life long, been obstructed and deadened, from an absence of facilities for information, and of incitements to study, in early life. For the parents themselves, these regrets come too late. The losses belong to a class, for which even repentance brings no remedy. And the question is, whether these same parents shall suffer their own children to grow up under a similar privation, to be doomed, in their turn, when they become men and women, to the same melancholy retrospect, and to the same unavailing regrets.

The people of this State are, and must, of necessity, continue to be, an *industrious* people, or they cannot subsist. Wealthy, as the State is justly supposed to be, yet, if all the property in it, both real and personal, were equally divided amongst all its inhabitants, it would not amount to more than four hundred dollars apiece. How soon would all this be gone, even to the very soil we tread on, without the annual replenishings of industry. Our soil furnishes nothing of spontaneous growth ; and its unrelenting ruggedness can be propitiated, only by the offerings of industry. Our people, therefore, as a people, cannot go abroad for information,—for that enlargement of mind, and that acquaintance with affairs, which comes from foreign travel, when pursued with an inquiring spirit, and an open eye. If the necessity of their condition debars them from visiting other States or countries, in quest of knowledge, then knowledge must be brought to them ; to their own doors and firesides ; or ignorance is the only alternative,—the ignorance of childhood, darkening into the deeper ignorance of manhood, with all its jealousies, and its narrow-mindedness, and its superstitions, and its penury of enjoyments ; poor, amid the intellectual and moral riches of the universe ; blind, in the splendid temple which God has builded ; and famishing, amid the profusions of Omnipotence. The minds, then, of our people, should travel, though their bodies remain at home ; and, for these journeyings and voyages, books are an ever-ready and costless vehicle.

With a rugged and unproductive soil, Massachusetts is, also, by far the most densely populated State in the Union. Hence, for the temporal and material prosperity of her people, for their subsistence, even, they are obliged to form an alliance with the great agencies of Nature, as auxiliaries in their labor. But Nature bestows her mighty forces of wind, and water, and steam, only upon those who seek them through intelligence and skill. The same circumstances, therefore, which seem to have marked out this State as a place of great mechanical, manufacturing, and commercial, industry, draw after them the necessity of such a wide range of knowledge, as, though always valuable, would not otherwise be so indispensable. To fit the people for prosecuting these various branches of business with success, or even to rescue them from making shipwreck of their fortunes, they must

become acquainted with those mechanical laws that pervade the material world. They must become intelligent machinists, millwrights, shipwrights, engineers ; not craftsmen, merely, but men who understand the principles upon which their work proceeds ; so that, by the skillful preparation and adjustment of machinery, the sleepless and gigantic forces of Nature may perform their tasks. They must know the nature and action of the elements. They must know the properties of the bodies used in their respective branches of business, and the processes by which rude materials can most cheaply be converted into polished fabrics. They must know the countries, whence foreign products are imported, whither domestic products are exported, the course of trade, the laws of demand and supply, what articles depend on the permanent wants of mankind, and, therefore, will always be in demand, and what depend upon caprice or fashion, and, therefore, are certain to be discarded, soon, for the very reason, that they are now in vogue. Now, all these lead out, by imperceptible steps, into mechanical philosophy, the applications of science to the useful arts, civil geography, navigation, commerce, political economy, and the relations which nations bear to each other. Although an individual might learn to perform a task, or execute an agency, in one of these departments, empirically, that is, by a knowledge of the modes of proceeding, but in ignorance of the principles on which the process depends, yet such individuals never originate improvements or inventions. Like the Chinese, the end of a hundred years, or of a hundred generations, finds them in the spot they occupied at the beginning.

Of those engaged in agriculture, an interest, intrinsically important and elevated, it may be said, that, just in proportion as the soils they cultivate are more sterile, should the minds of the cultivators be more fertile ; for, in a series of years, the quantity of the harvests depends quite as much upon the knowledge and skill of the cultivator, as upon the richness of the soil he tills. Take the year round, and the farmer has as many leisure hours as any class of men ; and he has this advantage over many others, that his common round of occupations does not engross all his powers of thought ; so that, were his mind previously supplied with a fund of facts, he might be meditating as he works, and growing wiser and richer together.

In fine, there is not, and the constitution of things has made it impossible that there should be, any occupation or employment, whatever, where an extended knowledge of its principles, or of its kindred departments, would not improve products, abridge processes, diminish cost, and impart dignity to the pursuit.

And how, without books, as the grand means of intellectual cultivation, are the daughters of the State to obtain that knowledge on a thousand subjects, which is so desirable in the character of a female, as well as so essential to the discharge of the duties to which she is destined ? Young men, it may be said, have a larger circle of action ; they can mingle more in promiscuous society ; at least, they have a far wider range of business occupations ; all of which stimulate thought, suggest inquiry, and furnish means for improvement. But the sphere of females is domestic. Their life is comparatively secluded. The proper delicacy of the sex forbids them from appearing in the promiscuous marts of business, and even from mingling, as actors, in those less boisterous arenas, where mind is the acting agent, as well as the object to be acted upon. If, then, she is precluded from these sources of information, and these incitements to inquiry ; if, by the unanimous and universal opinion of civilized nations, when she breaks

(To be continued.)